

Baccalaureate Programs in Applied Areas by Michigan Community Colleges (HB 4837), a Testimony of Support

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Good morning, Chairman Melton and members of the Committee, my name is Dan Phelan and I serve as president of Jackson Community College, an institution that serves about 11,000 credit students annually in the tri-county area of south central Michigan. With me today is Jackie Liebowitz, the Vice President of Patient Care at Allegiance Health, formerly Foote Hospital, in Jackson, a health care organization serving over 17,000 patients annually. We come before you today to speak in favor of House Bill 4837.

Before Jackie's testimony, permit me to clarify a few key issues surrounding accreditation that were raised at the last two hearings. The primary purpose of the accreditation process is to ensure the quality of the education and services provided by public and private colleges, universities, programs, non-profit, and for-profit organizations. It is important for students to know that the institution they enroll in has achieved the appropriate type of accreditation status. You should know that there are two major types of accreditation that are used for quality review, assessment, and assurance of institutions all over the world.

1. Institutional/Regional accreditation; and
2. Specialized, professional, or programmatic accreditation

1. Institutional/Regional Accreditation

Institutional/regional accreditation is the primary type of institutional accreditation used in the United States. It is carried out by six organizations that cover different geographic regions of the country. The six regional accrediting bodies collectively serve more than

3,500 of the approximately 3,800 degree-granting institutions in the United States. The State of Michigan and 19 other states are served by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Higher Learning Commission. All of Michigan's public universities and community colleges are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.

Institutional/regional accreditation status is achieved by a college or university that meets the quality standards and fulfills the requirements designated by the accrediting organization. In order to meet the requirements for institutional accreditation status, all aspects of the college or university, including academic quality, administrative effectiveness, and all other related services of the institution, are reviewed by the accrediting organization.

Institutional accreditation affirms that the college or university operates with a high level of quality in all its aspects. This type of accreditation is comprehensive and indicates that the institution has achieved quality standards in areas such as faculty, administration, curriculum, student services, and overall financial well-being. This type of accreditation is held in high regard in the world of education.

2. Specialized, Professional, or Programmatic Accreditation

Specialized, professional, or programmatic accreditation is principally an optional type of accreditation status that is designated for specialized departments, programs, schools, or colleges within a college or university that have already been awarded institutional/regional accreditation. Specialized, professional, or programmatic accreditation focuses on particular aspects of the department, program, school, or college's specified academic field of study. For instance, this type of accreditation status recognizes particular aspects of quality in the academic fields of nursing, law, or education, among others.

In sum, community colleges in Michigan are fully accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, which is

the only required institutional/regional accreditation for post-secondary education in Michigan. This is the only required accreditation for community colleges and universities and our nursing programs, including RN and the BSN, regardless of who offers it.

With regard to quality of our faculty, curriculum and students, the data prove the point. For example, at JCC, we have over 1,100 students in the nursing pipeline; meaning that they have enrolled with the intention of completing the general education and related courses necessary to earn a practical nursing (PN) certificate or an associates in applied nursing (ADN) degree and to sit for the National Council (NCLEX) examination. History demonstrates that our students have an exceedingly high level of success passing the boards as evidenced by our last quarter PN pass rate of 100% compared to the State PN average of 94.55%, and national average of 88.03%. Similarly, JCC enjoys an RN pass rate of 97.67%, while the State average last quarter was 88.53% and the national average was 88.19%.

I now introduce Jackie Liebowitz, the Vice President of Patient Care at Allegiance Health to provide a hospital perspective on student quality, BSN demand, and their desire for community colleges to deliver the BSN to augment the university programs...

[Comments from Ms. Liebowitz]

Thank you, Jackie. Members of the Committee, it is clear that the nature of the health care industry is changing, and changing rapidly. The employment hurdle for students is moving to the BSN. Indeed, states like Iowa and Washington already require 100% of their nurses to be BSN credentialed, as do any Veterans Administration hospitals.

As you know, the authority to award the BSN is but one of four program authorizations in applied areas that we seek. We also wish to award a baccalaureate degrees in cement technology, culinary arts, and maritime. We make this request because Michigan is at a critical point in its history. As the State transitions to a knowledge-based economy, increasing the educational attainment of the workforce is paramount. The baccalaureate degree in these aforementioned areas would allow community colleges to respond to workforce shortages in specific regions, and in specific occupations and industries.

Allowing community colleges to confer baccalaureate degrees in these niche areas will not impede collaboration with our 4-year partners. We are continuing to work with our universities as evidenced by University Centers on our campuses. In fact, we've reached out to our university partners and invited them to utilize our *Virtual Learning Collaborative* as an on-line and cost effective vehicle to offer baccalaureate-completion programs.

In order to help transform Michigan's economy and have a 21st century dynamic workforce, the entire postsecondary system needs to continue to collaborate and innovate in uncommon ways. While critics decry the "mission creep" of community colleges, it is instructive to note that it has been typical for collegiate missions to evolve as social needs change. In our own state, for example, Michigan State University was once Michigan Agricultural College, Eastern Michigan was once Michigan Normal College, and Wayne State University evolved from the former Detroit City College. Innovation is essential for our state's viability and evolution is a very natural course for organisms, societies, and yes, even organizations. It can be argued that if you are not evolving, you're dying.

Finally, community colleges are uniquely suited and positioned to respond to employer needs, and the baccalaureate in these proposed limited and applied and technical areas would allow colleges to respond to industry-specific demand for baccalaureate prepared workers. Furthermore, this baccalaureate education would be more accessible to

Michigan citizens, particularly to older, part-time, and working students who are more place-bound.

I ask you, this Committee, to please advance House Bill 4837 and join what 17 other states in this country have done in order to better serve its people. Allow Michigan community colleges to meet the needs of our students, hospitals and other health care providers, as well as our communities by permitting community colleges to expand upon that which they do so well...an accredited, quality, affordable, and accessible education. We ask that you advance 4837 fully knowing that we are accredited and are proven quality institutions of higher education whose only mission is teaching and student success. Advance this bill knowing that you are helping to respond to the changing dynamic of healthcare, the employment needs of the state, and the particular needs of students who first begin their post-secondary education at accredited community colleges. Thank you.

